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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2299 (2016), in which I was requested to report every three months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). It covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since the issuance of my report dated 5 July 2016 (S/2016/592).

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Political situation

2. On 15 August, the Council of Representatives confirmed five new ministers to head the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Construction and Housing. Nominations are yet to be made to fill key posts, including that of Minister of the Interior, after Mohammed al-Ghabban resigned on 5 July, Minister of Defence, after the Council withdrew confidence in Khaled al-Obeidi on 25 August, and Minister of Finance, after the Council withdrew confidence in Hoshyar Zebari on 21 September. The endorsement by the Council of An Nafi' Awsi as Minister of Construction and Housing brings the number of female ministers to 2 out of a total of 17 ministers currently endorsed by the Council.

3. On 30 July and 25 August, respectively, the Council of Representatives passed two important pieces of legislation, a law to ban the Baath Party and a general amnesty law, both part of the national political accord of 2014 and the programme of the Government. The former prohibits the Baath Party and any other party or entity that incites, glorifies or promotes racism, terrorism, takfirist ideology or sectarian cleansing. The latter grants amnesty for a number of lesser crimes and establishes a judicial review mechanism that, upon request, can allow for retrial and reinvestigation if criminal procedures were initiated on basis of testimony by secret informers or in cases in which confessions were extracted by force. The passage of

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the General Amnesty Law, in particular, proved controversial, with significant disagreements among political parties over the exemption of terrorist crimes and additional restrictions on the option of reinvestigation under the judicial review mechanism. Last-minute compromises between the National Alliance and the Iraqi Forces Coalition led to the adoption of the law with amendments to the more contentious articles. A number of parties within the National Alliance continue to criticize the law, which they argue will lead to the release of convicted terrorists.

4. The Council of Representatives continued to focus on allegations of corruption and mismanagement against senior members of the Government. The then Minister of Defence, Khaled al-Obeidi, was questioned by parliamentarians on 1 August regarding allegations of corrupt practices and graft, specifically in relation to defence contracts. During the questioning, he countered the accusations against him by accusing several senior legislators, including the Speaker, Salim al-Jubouri, of corruption relating to military contracts. The Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, instructed the Commission of Integrity to investigate the allegations on 2 August. For his part, the Speaker requested on 9 August that his immunity be lifted by the Council to allow him to appear before the investigative court charged with examining the accusations against him. The case was dropped by the court after his appearance before it. Following the withdrawal of confidence in the Minister of Defence on 25 August, the acting Army Chief of Staff, Othman al-Ghanimi, was appointed as Minister of Defence ad interim on 29 August.

5. On 25 August, the then Minister of Finance, Hoshyar Zebari, was questioned by the Council of Representatives regarding allegations of mismanagement of State funds for personal use and release of funds to the Kurdistan region of Iraq in contravention of the Federal General Budget Law of 2015. On 27 August, the Council declared that his answers had been insufficient. The Prime Minister stated on 6 September that the Council had overstepped its scrutinizing role in its attempt to impeach the Minister. On 21 September, however, the Council adopted, through a secret ballot, a motion of no confidence in Mr. Zebari, who announced that he would challenge the decision before the Supreme Court.

6. Recent pro-reform and anti-corruption protests were muted compared with earlier in 2016, probably owing to fatigue within the protest movement and record high temperatures. All eyes were on Baghdad on 15 July, given that Muqtada al-Sadr had called for a "peaceful, popular million-man demonstration" at the end of Ramadan. With estimated numbers of protestors ranging between 50,000 and 70,000, however, the turnout was lower than anticipated.

7. As military progress continued in Ninawa governorate in efforts to combat Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), growing attention was being paid by the international community and within Iraq to the development of a political, humanitarian and stabilization plan for the post-liberation phase in the city of Mosul and Ninawa. In addition, political and military discussions between Baghdad and Erbil resulted in an agreement on the conduct of military operations and the composition of military forces for the retaking of the governorate and the city.

8. The President of Iraq, Mohammed Fuad Masum, utilized his good offices to convene high-level meetings with a small number of key political stakeholders to overcome differences and stimulate political progress on important issues, including

political and administrative concerns after liberation, reform of the electoral legal framework and the timing of elections. The efforts are continuing.

9. Regarding elections, there were increasing discussions among political parties about the timing of the Provincial Council elections, due in April 2017, and the Council of Representatives elections, due in April 2018. While some maintain that the Provincial Council elections should be held as scheduled in April 2017, others have suggested that they should be postponed and possibly combined with the Council of Representatives elections in 2018 for the sake of operational, budgetary and security considerations. The discussions continue.

10. Iraq made good progress in strengthening its public financial system. On 19 July, the Council of Ministers approved a financial management law, in line with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic programme aimed at stabilizing the economy. The Council of Representatives held a first reading of the legislation on 22 September. Meanwhile, on 10 September, the first review of the stand-by arrangement, as approved by the IMF Executive Board on 7 July, was concluded in Amman. During the discussions, the IMF team and a government delegation, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Oil and the Central Bank of Iraq, concluded that sufficient progress had been achieved in areas such as reducing expenses, increasing transparency, rationalizing costs and improving some non-oil resources.

11. On 27 September, the Council of Ministers revised the budget proposal for 2017 from 100 trillion Iraqi dinars (some $83 billion) to 90.224 trillion dinars (some $75 billion), with planned oil exports set at 3.75 million barrels per day, up from 3.6 million barrels per day at $42 per barrel, up from $35, but a dollar less than the IMF had recommended. The projected budget deficit for 2017 is estimated at 5.608 trillion dinars (some $4.5 billion), which is lower than the IMF estimate of 12 trillion Iraqi dinars (some $10 billion).

12. Relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government improved. On 29 August, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, led a delegation to Baghdad and met the Prime Minister to discuss the resumption of oil exports and revenue-sharing. On 9 September, the Ministry of Oil issued a statement to clarify that the agreed resumption of oil exports was part of the original oil agreement between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government of December 2014, relating to oil exports from Kirkuk governorate to the port of Ceyhan, Turkey. On 28 September, the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Masoud Barzani, visited Baghdad for the first time since July 2013 and met the Prime Minister, the President, the Speaker and heads of political blocs. In a meeting with the Prime Minister, issues of common concern were discussed, including preparations for the liberation of Mosul and bilateral financial matters.

13. Efforts to reactivate the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, which has been inactive since 12 October 2015, made limited progress, and political disputes within the Kurdistan region of Iraq continued. On 10 August, the Kurdistan Democratic Party put forward an initiative seeking to relaunch negotiations with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group, which is yet to yield results. Meanwhile, the Patriotic Union and Gorran continued

the implementation of their agreement on enhanced cooperation of May 2016. On 10 September, the two parties announced their intention to form a single bloc in the Council of Representatives.

B. Security

14. The Iraqi security forces, the Peshmerga, the popular mobilization forces and local fighters, with support from the international counter-ISIL coalition, made further progress in retaking Iraqi territory from ISIL, with military successes in Anbar governorate and along the central axis of Iraq towards the city of Mosul. Between 23 and 25 August, the Iraqi security forces launched a major operation to recapture Qayyarah, south of Mosul, which was consolidated on 10 September. The Iraqi authorities announced on 20 September concentrated efforts to regain control of Sharqat, Salah al-Din governorate, which were successfully completed two days later. That progress notwithstanding, ISIL continues to operate in pockets in the surrounding areas, from northern Tikrit to Qayyarah, including the outskirts of Sharqat and Bayji.

15. The security situation remained unstable throughout Iraq during the reporting period. ISIL continued to encounter consistent losses of resources and territory. In response, it increased the number of terrorist attacks. A total of 44 vehicle bombs and suicide vest attacks targeted the Iraqi security forces, killing 346 security personnel and wounding 249 others. ISIL continued to target civilians on a daily basis, with an average of more than five incidents per day across Iraq. In Baghdad governorate alone, there were a reported 297 incidents involving explosive devices, killing 427 civilians and wounding 1,658 others.

16. Attacks on internally displaced persons occurred frequently during the reporting period, with 83 civilians killed and 100 wounded in 23 bomb attacks, in Ninawa, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates. On 27 July, a mortar attack struck the Salam camp in Dawrah, southern Baghdad, killing four displaced persons.

C. Regional and international developments

17. Iraq continued to engage with its neighbours, the international counter-ISIL coalition and the wider international community to secure political, economic, humanitarian and military support for combating ISIL. Meanwhile, the Government continued to work towards its national reconciliation and reform objectives, including addressing its fiscal constraints. Iraq remained active in multilateral organizations, including the League of Arab States, as well as the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States, of which Iraq holds the presidency for 2016.

18. A series of senior-level regional visits by Iraqi officials sought to expand bilateral relationships and garner political and military support. The Iraqi National Security Adviser, Faleh al-Fayad, visited the Islamic Republic of Iran on 16 August to exchange views on bilateral security issues. A parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker followed on 21 August, meeting the Chair of the Islamic Shura Council and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to discuss issues of sovereignty and efforts to combat ISIL.

19. Following the failed coup d'etat in Turkey, the President of Iraq, on 16 July, declared his country's support for the democratically elected institutions in Turkey and expressed the hope of a return to peace and stability. On 25 August, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Walid al-Moualem, visited Baghdad and met his counterpart, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, in addition to the President and the Prime Minister, to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and efforts to combat terrorism. In his capacity as Chair of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States, the Iraqi Speaker attended the Democracy and Solidarity Summit, held in Ankara on 1 September, seizing the opportunity to meet the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his counterpart, Ismail Kahraman, to discuss, among other things, preparations for the liberation of Ninawa governorate and the city of Mosul. Efforts to strengthen Iraqi relations with the country's neighbours suffered a setback, however, when, on 28 August, Baghdad formally requested the replacement of the Saudi Arabian Ambassador subsequent to some of his statements regarding the popular mobilization forces.

20. On 8 August, a delegation from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue follow-up discussions on a potential pipeline agreement. There were repeated incidents of armed conflict between the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan across the Iranian-Iraqi border. Following these developments, a delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government led by its Minister of the Interior, Karim Sinjari, visited Tehran on 14 August and met the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, to discuss how to resolve the cross-border skirmishes. The incidents have ceased for now.

21. On 23 and 24 August, the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq met the President and the Prime Minister of Turkey, Binali Yildrim, in Ankara to discuss bilateral economic and security issues and efforts to combat ISIL. During the meetings, Turkey indicated that it had decided to broaden its economic support and promote its partnership in the energy sector with the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

22. During the reporting period, a lower level of military activity on the part of Turkey, including air strikes against Kurdish Workers Party positions in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, was reported. The strikes targeted mainly districts in Dahuk and Erbil governorates. Although no casualties were reported, properties and farms were damaged.

23. At the League of Arab States summit, held on 31 July in Nouakchott, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq called for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Iraq. In the summit communiqué, the League stressed the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and offered support to the country's efforts to combat ISIL after the then Defence Minister of Iraq had also voiced concerns over the presence of Turkish troops in northern Iraq in the context of preparations for the liberation of Mosul and Ninawa. The international counter-ISIL coalition subsequently clarified that, while there were no plans for the involvement of Turkish troops in the battle for Mosul, the coalition itself respected the sovereignty of Iraq and would obtain the approval of the Government for the participation of any foreign troops.

24. On 18 September, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq reaffirmed in a statement the importance of the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Iraqi territory during a meeting with his Turkish counterpart on the margins of the Seventeenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held on Margarita Island, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, from 13 to 18 September. On 22 September in New York, in his remarks at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Iraq "appealed" to Turkey to withdraw its forces from Iraqi territory, given that they were "hindering" the liberation of Ninawa. Iraq and Turkey have engaged in consultations and bilateral dialogue to find a solution.

25. On 17 August, the President of Iraq announced that the Russian Federation had been conditionally permitted to use Iraqi airspace for anti-ISIL air strikes in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Prime Minister of Iraq subsequently clarified at his regular briefing following the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers that the Russian air force would cross through border corridors and would not be allowed to fly over Iraqi cities.

26. On 20 July, my Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator attended a pledging conference in support of Iraq held in Washington, D.C. The Minister for Foreign Affairs represented Iraq at the conference, which was chaired by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, John Kerry, and co-hosted by Canada, Germany, Japan, Kuwait and the Netherlands. My Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator also attended the joint plenary session for ministers for foreign affairs and of defence of the international counter-ISIL coalition, held on 21 July, in which the ministers restated their shared determination to disrupt and defeat ISIL and sought to refine a common approach to ISIL affiliates. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence of Iraq participated.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

27. My Special Representative continued his engagement with government officials, parliamentarians, political parties, civil society and religious and community leaders to advance inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation. In meetings with Iraqi interlocutors, he emphasized that sustainable peace and security could be achieved only through tolerance, cooperation and national reconciliation based on equality and justice for all. He called upon all political entities to intensify efforts to overcome divisions and work together in an inclusive and expeditious political process to pursue substantive reforms to strengthen governance, combat corruption and improve the standard of living of all Iraqis. In an effort to encourage dialogue and closer cooperation between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, he regularly met representatives of both Governments to urge progress on outstanding issues, including oil exports and revenue-sharing.

28. My Special Representative met political, ethnic and religious community leaders to discuss their concerns about the grave impact of the current conflict against ISIL on civilians, especially people from the country's diverse ethnic and religious communities. He continued to advocate with the Government and the international community to undertake all efforts, in strict compliance with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law, to put an end to the widespread and systematic abuses perpetrated by ISIL, which may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and to secure the safe release of civilians, including women and girls from minority communities, still held captive by ISIL. The need to provide psychosocial, medical and other forms of support was underlined, notably for the survivors of sexual violence and sexual slavery. He also encouraged the Government to consider national and international options to hold ISIL accountable and to ensure the preservation of criminal evidence for future use before a court.

29. Following reports of human rights violations perpetrated by pro-Government forces during liberation operations, my Special Representative continued to call upon the Government to conduct impartial and effective investigations into reported abuses and to hold to account those found responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. He emphasized that providing and guaranteeing law and order and security to all citizens of Iraq were the primary responsibilities of the respective State organs and institutions and must remain their obligation.

30. In preparation for the operations to liberate the city of Mosul and Ninawa governorate, my Special Representative met officials from the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, parliamentarians from Ninawa, representatives of the Turkmen and other ethnic communities and religious and community leaders to underscore that the authorities and local actors needed to accelerate political planning for the days after liberation. He stressed the importance of protecting civilians and their property during military operations and urged all parties to the conflict to do their utmost to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law and allow civilians to leave affected areas safely and with dignity.

31. During the joint plenary session for ministers for foreign affairs and of defence of the international counter-ISIL coalition, held on 21 July, my Special Representative encouraged the international community to provide adequate support for humanitarian operations along with military assistance. He underlined that a well-managed humanitarian, explosive hazard threat mitigation, stabilization and rehabilitation effort could help to achieve a lasting victory over ISIL. That effort should accord priority to the protection of civilians.

32. On 10 August, my Deputy Special Representatives addressed the Second International Conference on Psychological and Media Operations to Counter Da'esh, hosted by the Government of Iraq in Baghdad. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs emphasized that the global threat from ISIL was continuing to diversify and reiterated the importance of countering the group's ideology and activities through a multi-pronged response and counter-narratives to address radicalization and violent extremism. My Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator outlined the specific steps that security and armed forces could take to protect civilians in upcoming military operations, including in Mosul.

33. On 11 August, my Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and the Office of the Prime Minister signed an agreement to help to strengthen the capacity of the Government to detect, investigate and prosecute high-profile and complex corruption cases. Progress was made in the establishment of the two funding facilities for economic reform, which will mobilize international donor support for reforms in the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. On 26 September, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an agreement to activate its funding facility. At the time of writing, an agreement with the federal Government to activate its funding facility was still to be concluded.

34. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNDP are working with the Government to develop specialized programmes to help to deradicalize young people. Under the leadership of UNFPA, agencies are developing a pilot project to train young leaders in conflict resolution and mediation skills.

35. On 23 September, my Special Representative for Iraq delivered remarks at the signing ceremony of a joint communiqué by the Government and the United Nations on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. My Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs were the signatories, while the United States was represented by the Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, Sarah Sewall. My Special Representative noted that the Government was primarily responsible for eradicating sexual violence in conflict and holding perpetrators accountable. He also highlighted the country's responsibility to develop a plan of action to implement the agreement and called for the creation of a high-level interministerial body that could serve as a partner to the United Nations, in particular after the abolishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2015.

36. On 19 September, my Special Representative participated in a ministerial-level side event entitled "The fight against impunity: bringing Da'esh to justice", co-hosted by the Governments of Iraq, Belgium and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the high-level segment of the General Assembly. During the meetings that he held on the sidelines of the session, my Special Representative continued to stress that accountability for crimes committed by ISIL in the context of Iraq would be an essential step in providing justice to the victims and in supporting reconciliation efforts.

37. My Special Representative worked closely with the parliamentary majority bloc, the National Alliance, and its newly elected Chair, Ammar al-Hakim, to advance national reconciliation. On 2 October, the Leadership Council of the National Alliance met and endorsed a social peace and historic national compromise initiative document, drafted by a five-member committee, requesting the Political Council of the National Alliance also to review it. On 5 October, my Special Representative briefed the Political Council, at its invitation, as part of its review process. The overall atmosphere of the meeting was positive and engaging.

B. Electoral assistance

38. UNAMI continued to provide technical support to the Independent High Electoral Commission on preparations for the Provincial Council elections in 2017, including for a process to update voter registrations. The Commission established 683 voter registration centres in 13 governorates for the process. During the reporting period, it biometrically captured and updated the data of 1,237,118 voters. Furthermore, in accordance with the Political Parties Law (No. 36 of 2015), it has begun the process of registering political parties for the upcoming elections. As at 25 September, 100 political parties (57 that ran in the elections in 2014 and 43 established thereafter) had applied for registration.

39. Iraqi political leaders continued to discuss reform of the electoral legal framework. They expressed opinions, both publicly and privately, on possible areas of reform, including changes to the electoral system and the Independent High Electoral Commission and reducing the number of seats on the provincial councils. There was also a recommendation stemming from several gender symposiums, including meetings and workshops, to strengthen existing constitutional provisions for ensuring at least 25 per cent representation of women in elected bodies, including a proposal to enable women candidates to gain seats outright in addition to the quota requirements. The timing of both the Provincial Council and Council of Representatives elections were also a subject of significant debate.

40. UNAMI coordinated a meeting between the Independent High Electoral Commission and members of the diplomatic community in Baghdad on 21 July at the Commission's premises. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs represented UNAMI at the meeting, at which the Commission provided a briefing on ongoing preparations for the Provincial Council elections. In turn, members of the diplomatic community reiterated their commitment to supporting the democratic process in Iraq.

C. Human rights developments and activities

41. Armed conflict, acts of violence and terrorism continued to take a grave toll on civilians in Iraq. UNAMI recorded a minimum of 3,001 civilian casualties (967 killed and 2,034 wounded), bringing the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the beginning of the armed conflict in January 2014 to at least 71,123 (23,952 killed and 47,171 wounded).

42. Iraq continues to suffer from terrorist attacks and other acts of violence at a sustained level comparable to the period covered in my previous report. While many of these attacks were carried out by unknown perpetrators, ISIL claimed a number of them. For example, an attack by a suicide bomber on 24 July killed 14 individuals and wounded 22 others in Kazimiyah, Baghdad. On 28 August, individuals wearing explosive vests targeted a wedding in the village of Ayn Tamr, Karbala', killing at least 17 civilians and wounding at least 25 others. On 5 September, the Karradah area of Baghdad was struck by a suicide vehicle attack that left 13 individuals dead and 18 others wounded.

43. UNAMI received numerous reports alleging serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law perpetrated against civilians, in particular by ISIL. Members of diverse ethnic and religious communities, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons remain especially vulnerable.

44. UNAMI continued to receive reports of abductions, killings and persecution by ISIL of those opposed to its ideology or rule. For example, ISIL reportedly abducted 15 civilians from Hawijah, Kirkuk governorate, on 30 July for cooperating with the Iraqi security forces and assisting civilians to flee from ISIL-held areas. On 31 August, ISIL allegedly beheaded nine civilians with a chainsaw in Tall Afar, Ninawa governorate, after a self-appointed ISIL court accused them of joining the resistance against the group. ISIL continued to target those who sought to flee from areas under its control. For example, on 3 and 4 August, an estimated several hundred internally displaced persons attempted to leave villages controlled by ISIL in Hawijah district. It is estimated that at least 60 people may have been killed, either while seeking to flee or after being caught by ISIL.

45. Further reports were received that ISIL may have used weaponized chemical agents in attacks during the reporting period. On 22 July, ISIL mortar attacks in the Tall Afar area reportedly resulted in three Peshmerga fighters suffering from breathing difficulties and sore eyes, and one of them additionally from burns. On 22 and 23 August, ISIL allegedly shelled a village in Qayyarah, Ninawa governorate. Some 20 residents reportedly experienced breathing difficulties. UNAMI could not verify whether weaponized chemical agents had been used.

46. Reports continued to be received by UNAMI about human rights violations perpetrated by armed groups associated with the Iraqi security forces as well as elements of the Peshmerga and affiliated groups. For its part, the committee established by the Prime Minister in June to investigate reports of alleged disappearances in Fallujah has still not released any information about its work.

47. Iraqi local authorities took measures regarding forced evictions and preventing the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin. For example, on 26 July, the Babil Provincial Council adopted a decision to demolish the homes of persons convicted of being members of ISIL and forcibly evict their family members from the governorate. On 30 August, the Salah al-Din Provincial Council adopted a decision to forcibly evict all families of persons suspected of association with ISIL from the governorate for 10 years and prevent those outside the governorate from returning if a family member was involved with ISIL. UNAMI has written to the Prime Minister to register its concern about these developments, pointing out that Iraq is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and cannot act in violation of humanitarian law or peremptory norms of international law by imposing collective punishments.

48. Air strikes and shelling continued to cause civilian casualties, but UNAMI was unable to verify their numbers or perpetrators. On 15 August, two air strikes hit northern Mosul. One killed 8 civilians, including a child, and wounded 12 others; eight ISIL members were also killed. The other hit a complex, killing 5 civilians and wounding 35 others, including 3 children. ISIL had an office in the complex, which also housed civilian offices and stalls.

49. Iraq continued to apply the death penalty to persons convicted of a range of capital offences. Executions were carried out at the Nasiriyah central prison, Dhi Qar governorate. On 17 August, four convicts were reportedly executed. On 21 August, the Iraqi authorities executed 36 men convicted of participating in the Camp Speicher mass killings in June 2014. On 31 August, seven foreigners convicted of belonging to Al-Qaida were executed. Sources and local media reported that three foreigners were executed at the Nasiriyah central prison on 8 September. The United Nations has repeatedly called upon the Government to impose a moratorium on all death sentences and executions, in particular given the weaknesses of the Iraqi criminal justice system and the risk of non-compliance with international standards of due process and fair trial.

50. UNAMI continued to receive occasional reports on the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. On 31 August, following the receipt of reports about the recruitment of children in at least one displacement camp, my Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs reiterated in a statement that involving children in fighting was totally unacceptable. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund, received reports of 62 incidents of violations against children during the period from 1 July to 25 September, affecting 151 children. The majority of the incidents were reported to have taken place in the course of military operations in Baghdad, Anbar and Ninawa governorates. Only 29 of those incidents, affecting 42 children, could be verified as at the time of writing.

51. Killing and maiming injuring continued to be the violation most reported, with 23 children confirmed killed and 15 maimed. Reports of another 89 children killed and 18 maimed remain under verification. The majority of child casualties were a result of bomb attacks, mainly in Baghdad, Ninawa and Salah al-Din governorates. The Task Force also received information about an incident of attacks on schools and four attacks on hospitals during the reporting period, while four cases of recruitment and use of children were verified.

52. My Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict issued a statement on 3 August 2016 to mark the second anniversary of the Sinjar tragedy, in which ISIL targeted civilians, many of them members of the Yazidi community as well as members of the Shia Turkmen, Shia Shabak and Christian communities, and subjected hundreds of women and girls to sexual violence, slavery, abduction and trafficking in persons, which continues to this day. She called upon all religious and community leaders in the region to use their moral authority to help families and communities to understand that the stigma and shame of rape always rested with the perpetrators and never with the victims.

53. UNFPA continued to support the Department of Health Centre in Dahuk governorate to provide the necessary medical care, including mental health and psychosocial support, to survivors of sexual violence. UNFPA reported an increase in reported cases in locations with available services. More than 600 survivors have thus far used the services. This is attributed to a number of factors, including safer services, the provision of transportation, the involvement of Yazidi community members as part of the response and improved referral mechanisms.

54. On 20 July, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, together with the Kurdistan Regional Government, launched a women and peace and security programme aimed at intensifying efforts towards the implementation of the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Under the programme, protection services are to be extended to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence by supporting 26 field offices of the General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women under the Ministry of the Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government. On 1 September, the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government jointly organized a conference in Erbil to present the plans of various ministries for the implementation of the national action plan. It was attended by representatives of the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society organizations and the international community. Participants highlighted the lack of financial resources as a key obstacle impeding the full implementation of the national action plan.

D. Camp New Iraq and Camp Hurriya

55. The United Nations continued to monitor the humanitarian situation of the residents of Camp Hurriya. On 21 September, the last residents left Iraq, marking the completion of the relocation process of 3,072 individuals outside Iraq. The relocation of the entire camp population was made possible following an agreement and extension of funds to relocate all residents outside Iraq in 2016.

E. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

56. The humanitarian crisis in Iraq remains one of the largest and most complex in the world. More than 10 million Iraqis currently require some form of assistance. Each month, humanitarian partners are reaching on average 1 million people with assistance throughout the country. By the end of the year, depending on the scale and duration of the military operations in Ninawa, as many as 12 million to 13 million Iraqis are expected to require humanitarian assistance.

57. Fighting continued to cause widespread displacement and to put civilians at grave risk. More than 100,000 civilians have been displaced since mid-June and hundreds of thousands more are expected to leave their homes in the months ahead. Many displaced families have been forced to trek long distances in extreme heat and hardship to reach safety. In one of the largest movements during the reporting period, more than 40,000 people sought shelter at the Debaga camp, Erbil governorate. Thousands of men and boys who have been screened, however, are unable to rejoin their families in the main sections of the camp because of acute overcrowding. Families leaving ISIL-controlled areas are subject to security screenings by the government authorities and often by affiliated forces. Credible reports of boys and men being separated from their families and held in difficult conditions at some sites are deeply worrying. Civilians continue to be at risk from artillery and cross-fire. On 18 August, mortar shells hit a security screening site north of Bayji, reportedly killing 14 people and injuring 35, including more than 20 displaced persons.

58. In a positive development, families who had been stranded between military front lines east of Mount Sinjar, Ninawa governorate, since November 2015 were allowed to move out of the area in July and relocated to the Debaga camp. The return of displaced populations to their home of origin is accelerating. Nearly 900,000 of the more than 3.4 million people who have been displaced since the rise of ISIL have now returned to their homes. Some 8,000 people have returned to Fallujah, although the majority of the more than 85,000 people who fled from Fallujah in May and June remain dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival, living in camps and sites in Amiriyah al-Fallujah, Habbaniyah Tourist City and Khalidiyah, Anbar governorate.

59. Under the leadership of my Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and in close coordination with government authorities in Baghdad and Erbil, humanitarian partners are preparing for the humanitarian consequences of military operations to retake control of the city of Mosul. In a worst-case scenario, as many as 1.2 million to 1.5 million people may be affected. Depending on the level of destruction and the number of people displaced, the humanitarian operation could conceivably become the single largest in the world in 2016.

60. In July, humanitarian partners launched a flash appeal for $284 million to prepare for the operation in Mosul, only half of which had been received by the end of September. Key components of the plan, including the construction of emergency camps, water and sanitation and health care, are critically underfunded. The humanitarian operation as a whole remains severely underfunded. In January 2016, the United Nations and its partners launched an appeal for funding in the amount of $861 million to provide relief to 7.3 million people nationwide. To date, 54 per cent of the required funds, or $463 million, has been received. Consequently, more than half of the programmes planned under the Humanitarian Response Plan in 2016 have either shut down or could not begin at all. In the coming three months, 64 additional life-saving programmes will close unless support is mobilized. At the pledging conference in support of Iraq aimed at mobilizing funding for humanitarian assistance, explosive hazard threat mitigation and stabilization, held on 20 July, in excess of $2 billion was pledged.

61. More than 850,000 people displaced since the beginning of the conflict with ISIL have returned to their homes in newly liberated areas, including 200,000 to Ramadi, Anbar governorate, which was liberated at the end of 2015. The UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization has been authorized to work in 17 liberated towns and districts and has expanded operations in the recently liberated areas of Ramadi, Fallujah and Karmah, Anbar governorate, and Qayyarah, Ninawa governorate. Thousands of recently returned men and young people have been employed in brigades clearing rubble and rehabilitating public buildings and thoroughfares. Hundreds of businesses have received grants and critical public infrastructure, including power stations, electricity grids and water treatment plants, has been restored. A second expanded stabilization channel has been added, focused on medium-sized projects that generate large numbers of jobs in newly liberated cities and stabilize the corridors between liberated districts.

62. The pace of stabilization continues to be slowed by widespread contamination of unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. Working on the basis of

priorities agreed through the government stabilization task force, the Mine Action Service of the United Nations conducted threat assessments of and cleared critical infrastructure, thereby accelerating stabilization efforts in Fallujah and Karmah. The Service is also providing mine risk education to families in displacement centres, helping to ensure their safe return to newly liberated areas. As the mine action subcluster lead, the Service has developed a humanitarian mine action plan for Mosul in line with the broader humanitarian response efforts.

63. On 17 July, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage inscribed the Iraqi southern Mesopotamian marshlands and the three Sumerian sites of Ur, Uruk and Tall Aridu on the World Heritage List as a mixed natural and cultural site with outstanding universal value. This designation, the culmination of more than a decade of effort by the Government, assisted by UNESCO, is an important step in securing national commitment and international assistance to balance the preservation of an environmentally and archaeologically fragile area with economic development in an impoverished region.

F. Security and operational issues

64. The United Nations system in Iraq continues to work in a high-risk security environment and implement programmes and activities based on programme criticality. As more areas are retaken from ISIL control, demands on the United Nations for stabilization and humanitarian assistance will continue to increase. ISIL has increasingly employed asymmetrical warfare tactics in attacks against security forces and civilian targets throughout Iraq, and United Nations programmes and personnel remain at a high risk of collateral damage.

65. The United Nations security management system continues to work closely with relevant government security agencies to ensure that appropriate security measures for humanitarians remain in place during efforts to liberate areas from ISIL control.

66. The construction of a new and integrated compound in Baghdad for both UNAMI and United Nations country team staff is under way. Several hundred additional office spaces and residential accommodation are expected to be completed by June 2017, allowing for an increased staff presence in Baghdad so as to better address mandate requirements.

IV. Observations

67. The people of Iraq continue to articulate their demands for political and economic reforms and an end to corruption. I support the continued efforts of the Prime Minister and the Government in this regard. I welcome the recent ministerial nominations and appointments aimed at improving governance and services to the people and urge the timely filling of the remaining vacant ministerial positions. I call for these changes to be carried out in a manner that guarantees the continuity of government institutions and in accordance with the Constitution and parliamentary rules and procedures. Changes must also involve broad-based dialogue and

consultation with political partners, and have at their heart the interests and needs of the Iraqi people.

68. The encouraging progress made notwithstanding, fragmentation and political disputes among and within political forces continue to adversely affect the ability of national leaders to come together for the good of the Iraqi people. I welcome the President's efforts to forge unity and consensus among the Iraqi political leaders and call upon them to set aside their differences and act in the national interest.

69. I welcome the recent progress on the parliamentary legislative agenda, including the adoption of a law to ban the Baath Party and a general amnesty law, which are in line with the national political agreement and the Government's programme. This constitutes a further step towards the consolidation of State-building. I encourage the passage of other key legislation, such as that on justice and accountability.

70. I reiterate my call upon political leaders in the Kurdistan region of Iraq to overcome their differences through dialogue and to expeditiously resolve the political stalemate and normalize the functioning of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. There is also a pressing need for the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to continue their constructive dialogue in order to reach a durable understanding on oil exports and revenue-sharing, Peshmerga salaries and other outstanding issues. Reaching such a mutual understanding will enable both Governments to jointly and effectively confront the shared challenges of today and those that will emerge after the liberation of all areas from ISIL in the future. I further call upon both parties to jointly advance sustainable solutions with regard to the post-ISIL period, including on the issue of disputed internal boundaries, that benefit all Iraqi communities and respect their constitutional rights. The United Nations remains ready to lend its assistance in that respect.

71. The Government of Iraq continues to achieve steady military victories and retake territory from ISIL while asserting State authority. Together with planning the military aspects, the Government and local actors need to accelerate political planning for the period after liberation from ISIL, addressing the issues of governance, law and order and political management of the city of Mosul and the rest of Ninawa governorate. I call upon all forces involved in the campaign to retake control of Mosul to lead by example and to observe international human rights standards with regard to the treatment of detainees and civilians, creating a positive environment for the reconciliation process in the post-ISIL period.

72. I urge the leaders of all communities and groups to turn a new page in the history of Iraq and make national reconciliation and peace a top priority. A national political compromise remains a matter of considerable urgency. Sustainable peace and security can be achieved only by engaging in serious dialogue, culminating in a historic compromise among the country's diverse components and groups in a spirit of equality, justice, tolerance and cooperation.

73. I urge Iraqi political leaders to discuss and formulate a definitive schedule for the holding of upcoming electoral events and to provide clarity on the electoral legal framework. This is essential to provide the Independent High Electoral Commission with adequate time to prepare for the elections and provide a clear direction to the Iraqi people. I am convinced that Iraqi leaders will abide by their national and

international commitments, specifically on the holding of credible elections that reflect the will of the people, adherence to the principles of inclusivity and the promotion of women's participation and representation in politics. The United Nations stands ready to provide the relevant technical assistance.

74. While recognizing that electoral systems and legal frameworks require periodic review to reflect evolving realities, I urge that such initiatives not be used for short-term gains that could render the political system unstable or marginalize smaller political parties. Adequate discussions, reflecting the true wishes of the Iraqi people, should be held to determine whether there is a genuine need to change the current electoral legal framework and, if there is, the form that such changes should take.

75. The general human rights situation in Iraq remains of concern. Civilians are being affected by armed conflict, terrorism and other acts of violence on a daily basis. Casualty figures remain high and civilians are continuing to bear the brunt of the violence. I continue to deplore this unacceptable situation and the unrelenting bloodletting in Iraq. I reiterate my call upon all parties to undertake every effort to safeguard the lives of civilians and urge Iraqis to demonstrate their strength through unity.

76. I am concerned about the corrosive effect that the violence is having on the enjoyment of other rights, in particular by women, children, persons with disabilities and members of minority ethnic and religious communities. Legislative frameworks that provide for and protect the rights of these vulnerable groups do not exist or are insufficient. I am deeply concerned about the safety of those who continue to be held captive by ISIL, in particular the thousands of Yazidi women and children, and I call upon all those engaged in efforts to combat ISIL to make their safe release a prime objective in military operations. I also urge relevant Iraqi authorities and host communities to provide adequate support to these women and children once released to enable their return to lives in dignity and their full reintegration into their communities.

77. I reiterate that the crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq, including a systematic campaign of sexual and gender-based violence, may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide. I call for those found to be involved in such crimes to be brought to justice and upon the Government and the international community to continue to support the survivors and to implement mechanisms of accountability at the international and national levels that will ensure that the perpetrators of international crimes committed in the context of the armed conflict in Iraq are held accountable. I also urge the Government to implement policies aimed at countering violent extremism, together with appropriate, specialized programmes to assist, in particular, the thousands of young people who have been exposed to ISIL radicalization, so that they can be reintegrated into their families and communities. It is critical to continue to combat ISIL ideology even after all the Iraqi territory has been liberated. In the short term, it is essential that no evidence be damaged or destroyed. Steps must be taken to ensure thorough documentation and correct handling of such evidence so that it can be used in any future judicial proceedings. My Special Representative will continue to facilitate any international assistance necessary for this effort.

78. I welcome the recent signing of a joint communiqué between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. This constitutes an important step towards comprehensively addressing such violence, in particular as committed by ISIL against minority communities, inflicting unspeakable suffering on civilians and causing them to flee from their homes. I call upon the Government to promptly develop a plan of action and to designate a specific entity to chart the way forward for the implementation of the joint communiqué. I also call upon the Government and the international community to address the urgent need for services and livelihood support for survivors and children born of pregnancy resulting from rape, as called for in the joint communiqué.

79. Respect for the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, which form the bedrock of a democratic State, must be guaranteed as an integral part of the country's evolving democracy and reform process. I urge Iraq to consider enacting robust legislation that protects these rights in full compliance with its international obligations and that policies be put in place to ensure that law enforcement officials are properly trained to deal with peaceful public assemblies and that the public are educated about their rights and responsibilities.

80. Recurring reports of the use of weaponized chemical agents by ISIL remain a source of great concern. I condemn such acts, which are prohibited by international law, and urge that those found to be involved in them be brought to justice.

81. I urge the Governments of Iraq and Turkey to accelerate their bilateral efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution regarding the presence of Turkish troops in northern Iraq that will fully respect the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and ensure that all activities conducted in Iraq are done so in coordination with and with the full agreement of the Government of Iraq.

82. Additional focus and funding are required for civilian activities that are critical to secure the gains of the military campaign against ISIL. The progression of the campaign creates additional humanitarian needs. I call upon Member States to contribute generously to humanitarian operations. I urge donors to immediately fund the flash appeal for Mosul so that preparations can be made to assist the 1 million people likely to flee from the city. Significant additional funding is also required for the UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization and the Mine Action Service to respond to the stabilization and explosive hazard threat mitigation needs in the city. These are critical inputs to anchor the gains of the military campaign and to reinforce the foundation of a peaceful and secure Iraq.

83. I welcome the efforts to stabilize newly liberated areas and stress the importance of ensuring that conditions are in place for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced families to their homes. I acknowledge the major efforts required in Mosul and communities in Anbar, Diyala, Ninawa and Salah al-Din governorates to reconstruct public and private buildings and facilities, relaunch public services and rejuvenate local economies. I urge Member States to contribute to the UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization.

84. I welcome the recent listing of the Iraqi southern Mesopotamian marshlands on the World Heritage List and invite Iraq to use this to stimulate further efforts to preserve its natural and cultural heritage.

85. I note with satisfaction the completion of the relocation of more than 3,000 Camp Hurriya residents as requested by the Government of Iraq. I thank my Special Adviser, Jane Holl Lute, for her good offices resulting in the successful resolution of this humanitarian issue. I also express my gratitude to the Member States and international organizations that supported these efforts.

86. Lastly, I extend my appreciation to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and all the United Nations staff in Iraq for their efforts in assisting the Government and people. I trust that the country's international partners, including its neighbours, will continue to extend their support to my Special Representative in the implementation of the mandate of UNAMI.